



U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

BUILDING STRONG®

For Immediate Release:
Jan. 14, 2011

Contact:
Maggie Oldham - (402) 650-8154
margaret.e.oldham@usace.army.mil

Corps rehabilitating levees in North Dakota and Missouri River Basin

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District is using a formula of hard work plus a flexible approach to rapidly repair portions of the federal levees in the Missouri River Basin damaged by record runoff in 2010.

The Corps conducts regular inspections of federal levees throughout the Missouri River Basin. These levees are maintained and operated by local public sponsors. Those inspections identified the most critical levee segments needing restoration such as in Mandan, N.D.

Congress has allocated \$66 million toward Corps levee rehabilitation efforts. The levees must currently be active under the Public Law 84-99 Rehabilitation and Inspection program.

At Mandan, Omaha District commander Col. Robert J. Ruch will tour the levee construction site with North Dakota's Gov. Jack Dalrymple and Sen. John Hoeven on Tuesday, Jan. 18, from 10-11 a.m.

During the spring and summer of 2010, the Missouri River Basin experienced the third highest runoff season on record.

"When you have high water conditions with high velocity flows, ice jams and debris in the water channel, all that energy creates a hazardous environment," said Kim Thomas, chief of emergency management for the Omaha District. "Ice jams and fallen trees or tree limbs in the channel can scour and tear up berms and banks. That's what we're seeing on these projects."

Left unrepaired, the damaged portions of these levees could expose the public and local infrastructure to considerable risk.

"Take for example the Mandan project in North Dakota. There is a residential community and important public infrastructure right behind the levee," Thomas said. "Because of the flooding in 2010, there's a huge erosion area into the critical section of the levee. If we faced similar weather and runoff this year and the levee was not rehabilitated, there would be a higher risk of potential failure and flooding."

To respond rapidly to the problem, the Corps evaluated all of the qualifying sites and developed a framework for rehabilitation that meets all the engineering and levee safety requirements of the states and counties where the levees are located. That framework design can then be adapted based upon the unique conditions or requirements for each individual project. To keep projects on track as well as ensure safety and quality of work, there is a constant channel of communication that exists between the parties involved.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Omaha District
1616 Capitol Ave., Omaha, Neb. 68102
<https://www.nwo.usace.army.mil/>

“We insist that working fast and working smart are not mutually exclusive,” said Tim Gouger, project manager for the Missouri River Emergency Levee Rehabilitation. “We engage in daily communication between the project site, the district office in Omaha and the contractor, Weston Solutions. We have daily meetings, daily conference calls and government oversight at each of the projects.”

Central to the effort is an emphasis on safety – safety of the personnel working and safety of the surrounding communities.

“It’s important to note that we follow all the required standards for levee structure – there are no shortcuts here – it’s just the pace we do it at is accelerated,” Thomas said. “We have worked hard to ensure efficiency, meet deadlines and to be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars throughout our efforts to rehab these levees.”

Normally, restoring levees could take a year or longer to go through the design process, award a contract and do the actual construction. With this emergency process, the Corps is able with the right circumstances to have a project outlined, bid upon, contract awarded and construction completed in a little more than two months for smaller projects.

The rehabilitation work on these levees will restore the structures back to their original design and authorized level of protection prior to any potential flood event.

For media interested in participating in the tour of the Mandan levee rehabilitation, it is recommended that you arrive by 9:45 a.m. at the project office trailer off of 10th Ave. SW, just past 6th Street (next to Legion Park). For more information, please contact Maggie Oldham at 402-650-8154.

###